



**A Christian Ethic of Ecological Justice:
Moral Norms for Confronting Climate
Change**

Dan Spencer

Environmental Studies

The University of Montana

Goals

1. Define Ethics
2. Approaches to *Christian* Ethics
3. A Christian Ethic of Ecological Justice
4. From Moral Norms to Policy Guidelines
5. Climate Justice



What's at Stake? Montana's Native Flora & Fauna...



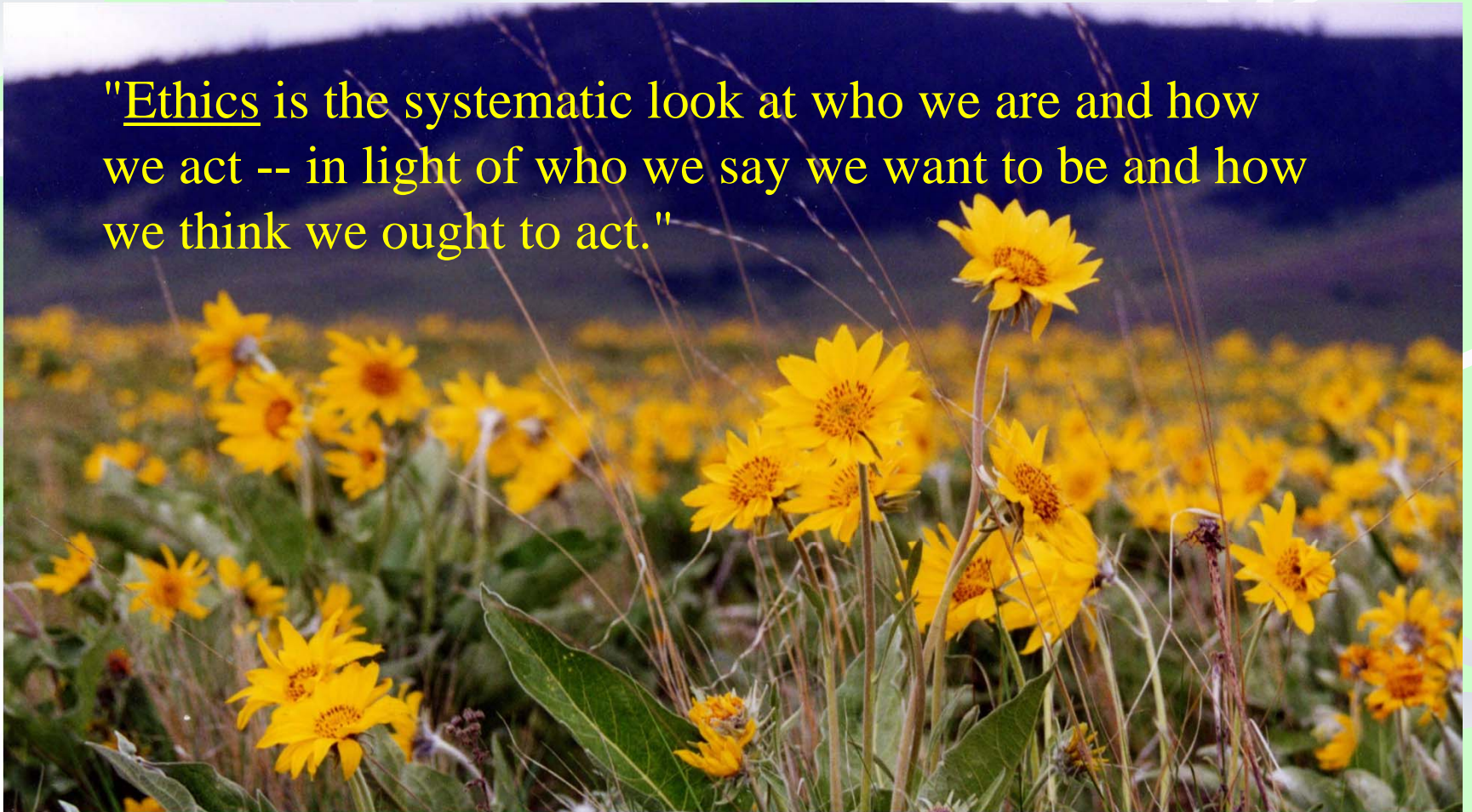
What's at Stake?

Human Communities around the Globe



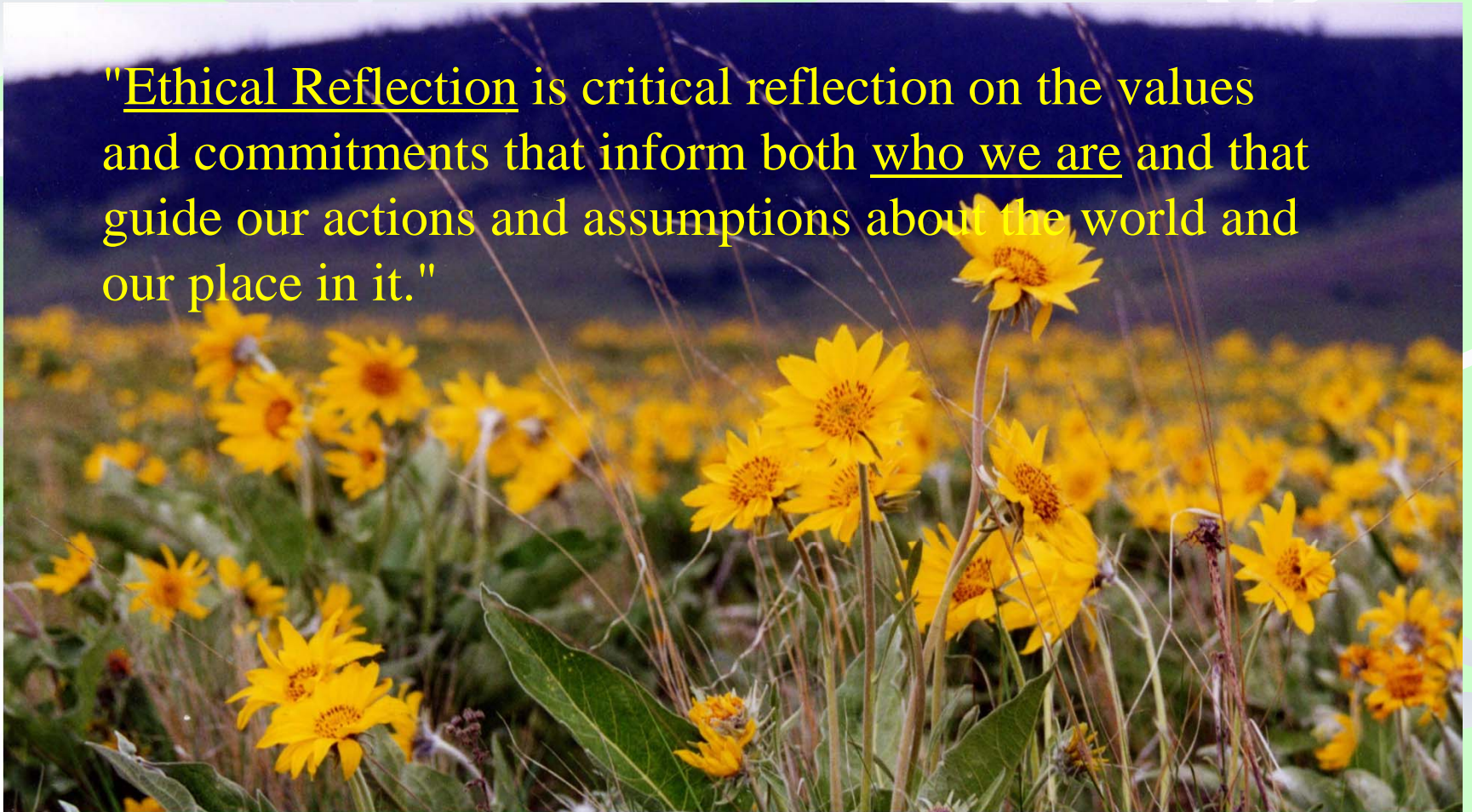
What is Ethics?

"Ethics is the systematic look at who we are and how we act -- in light of who we say we want to be and how we think we ought to act."



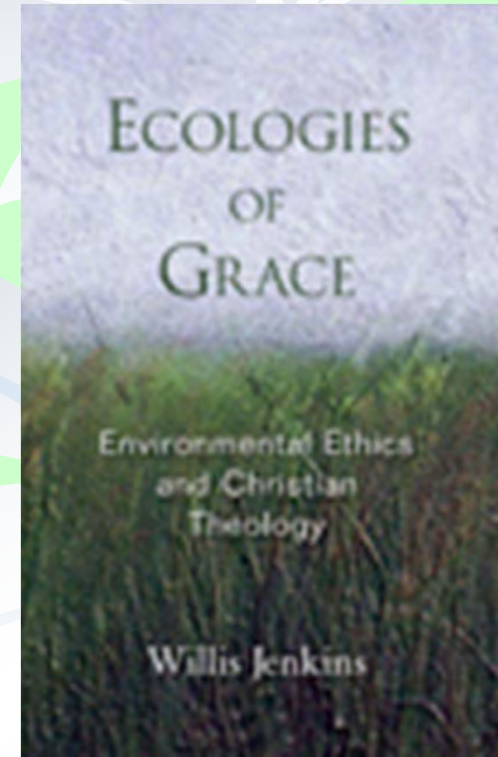
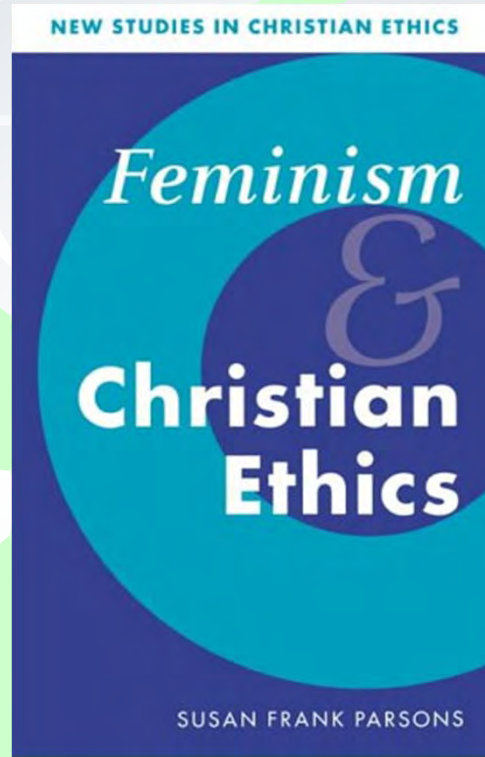
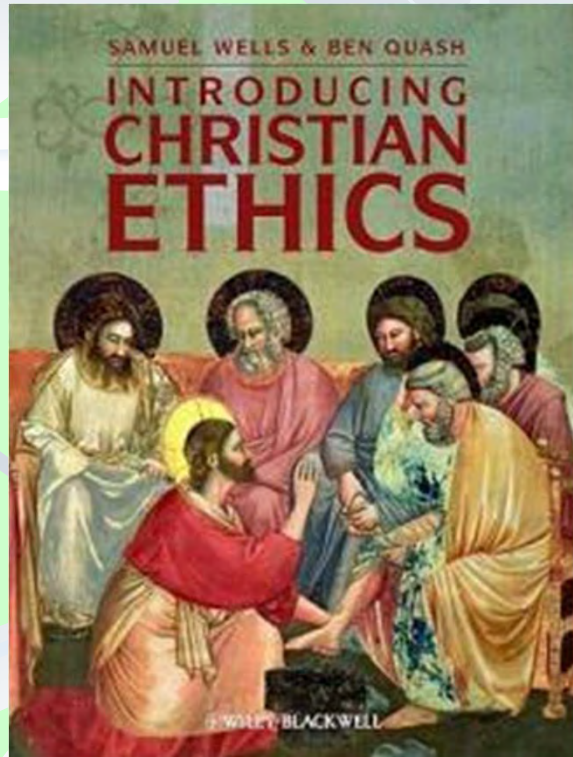
What is Ethics?

"Ethical Reflection is critical reflection on the values and commitments that inform both who we are and that guide our actions and assumptions about the world and our place in it."



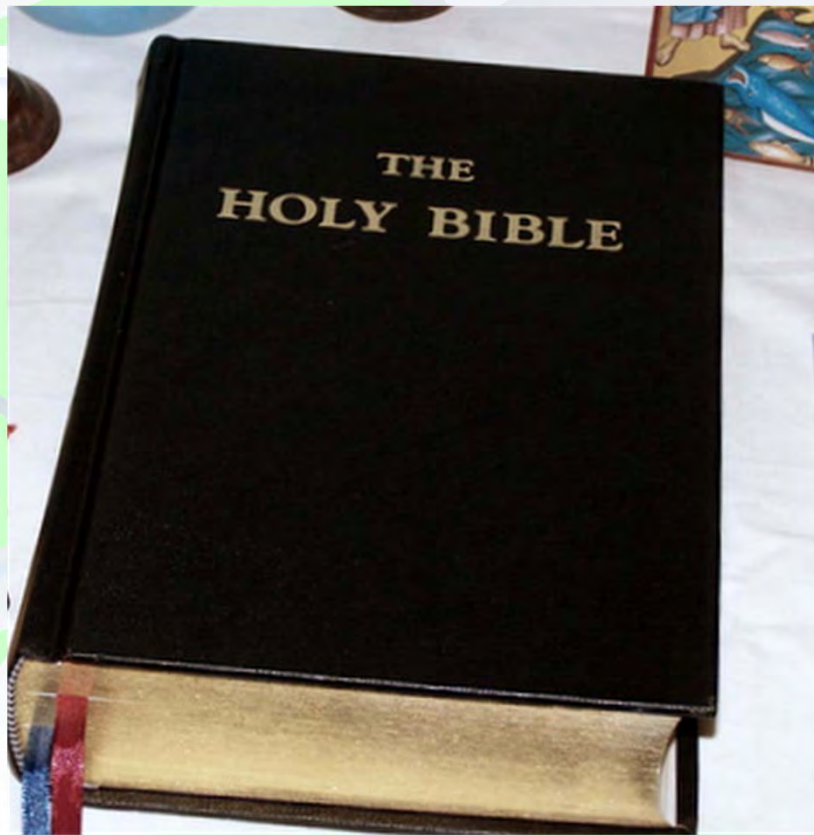
Christian Ethics:

Ethics done within the Christian Tradition and Community



Ways of Knowing God... & Ethics

The Book of Scripture

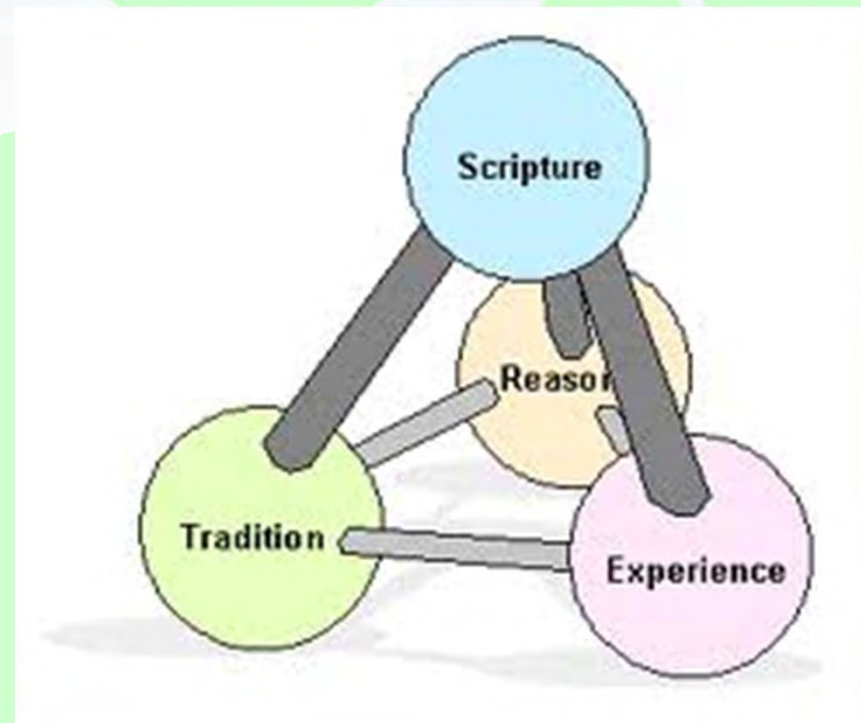
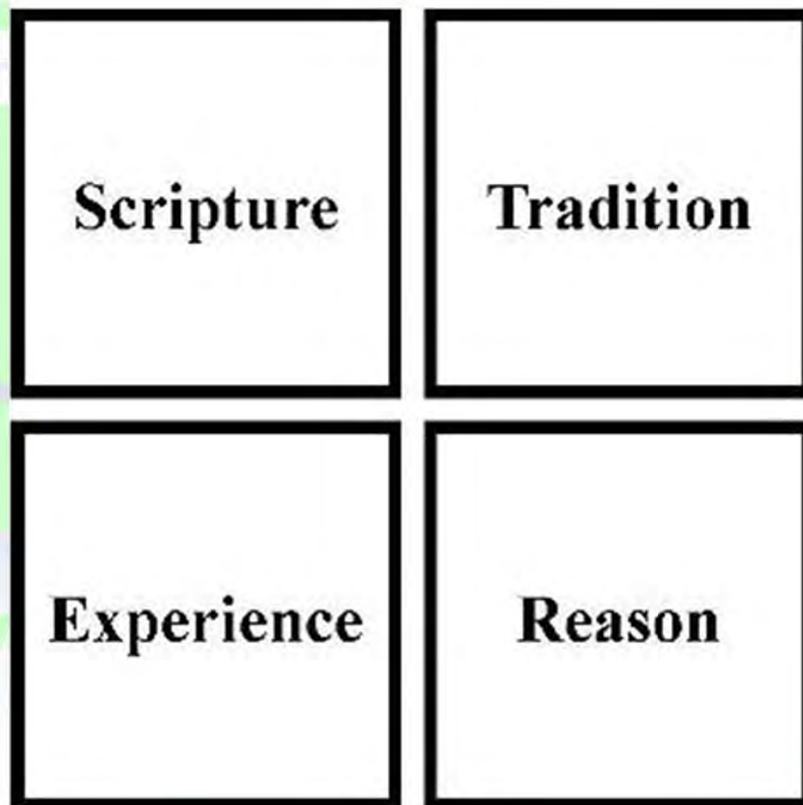


The Book of Nature



4 Main Sources for Christian Ethics

Wesleyan Quadrilateral



Enter the Enlightenment...

Pre-Enlightenment

- No conflict seen between:
 - Scripture
 - Tradition
 - Experience
 - Reason
- Science in harmony with Bible

Post-Enlightenment

- Truth equated with Literal Facticity
- Bible seen as source of myth and superstition, not scientific fact
- Example: Galileo

What is Truth?

**Truth is Literal Fact,
Empirically Provable**

Response of
Conservative
Christians: Biblical
Literalism, reject
Science as
Contradicting the
Bible

**Truth is Ultimate Meaning, Not
Subject to Empirical Testing**

Response of Liberal
Christians: Accept
Science for Empirical
Description of World;
Scripture & Tradition
provide source of
Truth as Meaning in
the World

Christian Framework for Examining Social & Environmental Issues: Ecological Justice

World Council of Churches:

1979: 4 Moral Norms

1. Sustainability
2. Sufficiency
3. Participation
4. Solidarity

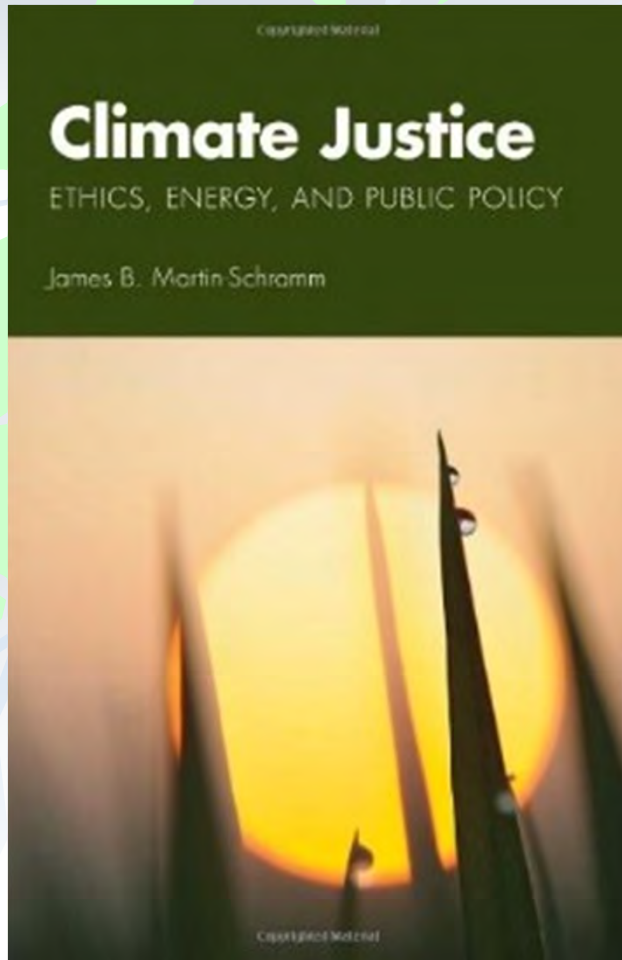
**1984: WCC addresses
Climate Change**

1. Luxury emissions of the Rich vs. Survival Emissions of the Poor
2. Nature has become a “co-victim with the poor.”

“Earth and people will be liberated to thrive together, or not at all... We must not allow either the immensity or the uncertainty pertaining to climate change and other problems to erode further the solidarity binding humans to one another and to other life.” *World Council of Churches, 1984*



Climate Justice: Ethics, Energy, and Public Policy by James Martin-Schramm

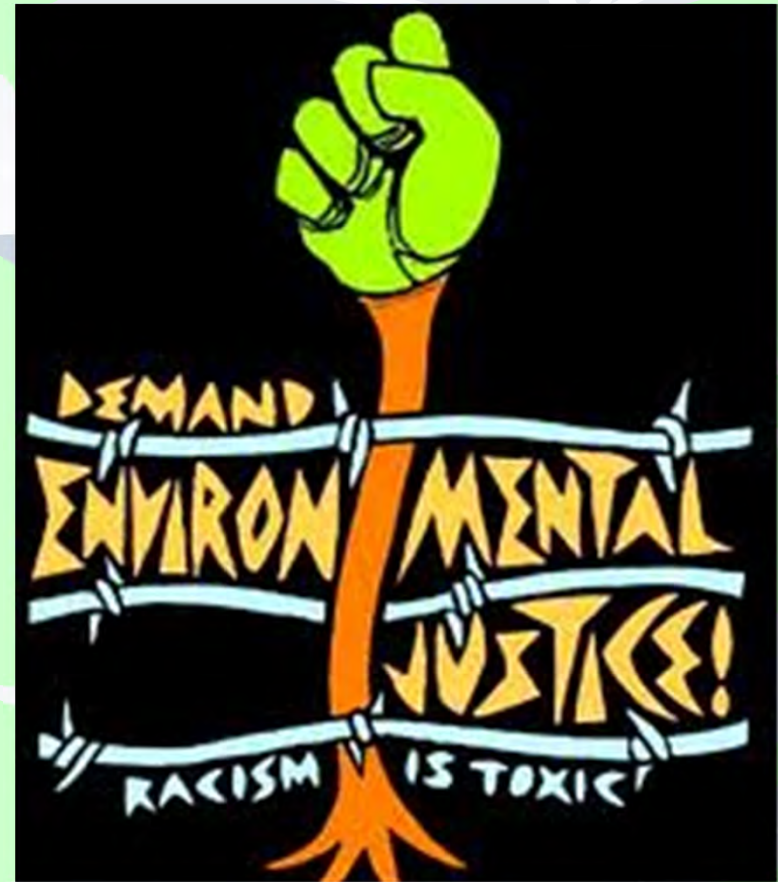


A Christian Ethic of Ecological Justice

“The ethic of ecological justice is *a biblical, theological, and tradition-based ethic* that emphasizes four moral norms: *sustainability, sufficiency, participation, and solidarity*. This ethic addresses human-caused problems that threaten both human and natural community and considers both human and natural communities to be ethically important.” *James Martin-Schramm*

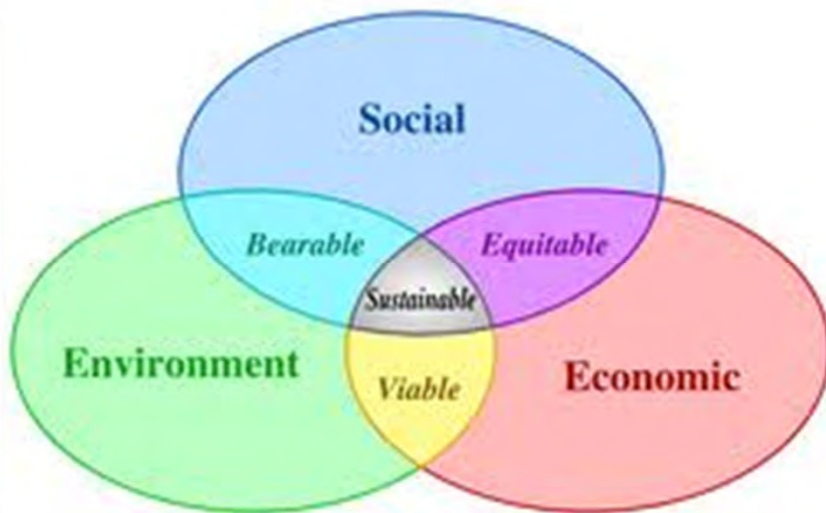
Framing the Ethic: Justice

- Biblical emphasis on God's care for the poor
- The prophetic tradition: Moses, Isaiah, Jesus
- Concern for freedom, equality, equity



1. Sustainability

“The long-range supply of sufficient resources to meet basic humans needs and the preservation of intact natural communities.

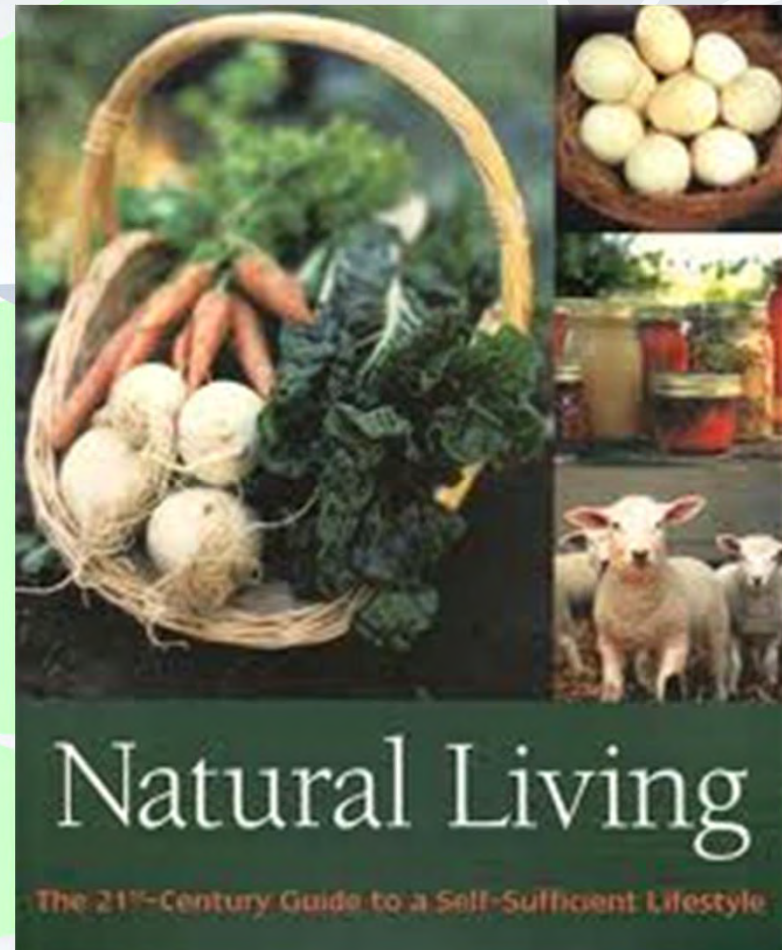


Concern for *Future Generations*: human and otherkind

Biblical doctrines of **Creation & Stewardship**

2. Sufficiency

- All forms of life are entitled to share in the goods of creation ... in terms of *basic needs, sharing, and equity*.
- Biblical themes: sufficiency in the wilderness & Jubilee
- Sufficiency & Sustainability are linked
- Non-Anthropocentric: God's concern for *all* creation



3. Participation

“The respect and inclusion of all forms of life in human decisions that affect their well-being.”

- Genesis Creation accounts: Intrinsic Goodness & Stewardship
- Prophets: Voice to the Voiceless
- Emphasis: Just Community



4. Solidarity



- Sharing the plight of the poor and oppressed
- Fundamental interdependence of humanity and nature
- Virtues: humility, compassion, courage, generosity
- Jesus: Example of Compassionate Solidarity

From Ethical Norms to Energy Policy: 12 Guidelines

1. **Equity**
2. **Efficiency**
3. **Adequacy**
4. **Renewability**
5. **Appropriateness**
6. **Risk**
7. **Peace**
8. **Cost**
9. **Employment**
10. **Flexibility**
11. **Timely Decision-making**
12. **Aesthetics**

I. *Temporal* Dimensions of Policy Proposals

1. Current Urgency
2. Future Adequacy
3. Historical Responsibility
4. Existing Capacity
5. Political Viability



I. Structural Dimensions of Policy Proposals



1. Scientific Integrity
2. Sectoral
Comprehensiveness
3. International
Integration
4. Resource Sharing
5. Economic Efficiency

I. Procedural Dimensions of Policy Proposals

1. Policy Transparency
2. Emissions Verifiability
3. Political
Incorruptibility
4. Implementational
Subsidiarity



Climate Justice in Guatemala



“We are working for Climate Justice: We shouldn’t be paying for things we did not originate.” Erika Gonzales, USAC

- **Emphasis on Adaption,
rather than Mitigation**
- **Learning from Villages
& Traditional
Knowledge to build
adaptation strategies**
- **Concern for Food
Security in midst of
drought & severe
weather changes**



Climate Justice: Climate Change & Environmental Justice

“We must create new partnerships and a new framework, connecting seemingly disparate issues and addressing the systemic inequities and chronic dilemmas facing communities, people, and ecosystems across the planet... Environmental justice activists focus on the way climate change affects communities, is embedded in social justice, impacts public health, and is intertwined with transportation and industrial facilities.”

- Angela Park, *Everybody's Movement: Environmental Justice and Climate Change*

6 Strategies for Building a Climate Justice Movement

1. Increase community groups' capacity and access to scientific data, communications expertise, and economic analysis
2. Deepen climate policy expertise and implement political strategies based on environmental justice values
3. Expand creation and distribution of climate justice materials
4. Support networking and information sharing through adoption of new technologies
5. Acknowledge issues of scale while building expertise at multiple levels
6. Build development capacity and better integrate environmental justice into existing funding streams

Hope in a Time of Climate Change?

Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in a lifetime;
therefore we must be saved by hope. -- Reinhold Niebuhr

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction
of things not seen. *Hebrews 11.1*



And now for conversation...

